

Mental Health and Our Children



percent
disorders

According to a July 2010 article from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, four million children and adolescents in this country suffer from a *serious* mental disorder that causes significant behavioral and emotional impairments. In any given year, only 20

of these children and adolescents with mental

are identified and receive mental health services.

Much of the time the disorders begin before the age of 14. However, there are long delays, sometimes decades, between the first onset of symptoms and when people seek and receive treatment. An untreated mental disorder can lead to a more severe, more difficult to treat illness and to the development of co-occurring mental health conditions.

What does this mean?

As your EAP, we would like to stress the importance of taking action when you have concerns about your child. It can be embarrassing or frightening to seek help for your child due to stigma or concern that you will be blamed or judged as a parent. Keep in mind that many of these disorders are neurologically based or genetically transmitted. They are not the direct result of your parenting. Also, the counselors at EAP are not there to judge, but to help.

The earlier a mental health condition can be diagnosed and treated the better the result. For example, when ADHD is identified as early as Kindergarten, you as parents can begin to learn the most effective strategies to help your child manage this neurological disorder. In addition, the school can begin to provide necessary support and interventions to make school the best experience possible for your child. When the condition is left untreated, the child often does poorly in school and with peer relationships. These difficulties may lead to anxiety and depression or behavioral issues such as delinquent behavior or dropping out of high school.

Signs of serious behavioral, emotional or mental problems are as follows:

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| X Problems across a variety of settings | X Social withdrawal or new fears |
| X Changes in appetite or sleep patterns | X Self-destructive or anger outbursts |
| X Regression – return to behaviors that are common in children of a earlier age | X Repeated thoughts of death or suicidal thoughts |

It is often surprising to parents to learn that children, like adults, can suffer from depression and anxiety. Other common disorders are autistic spectrum disorders, bipolar and eating disorders.

Even if you are not certain your child or teen's issues are serious, please consider coming to EAP to have your child assessed. EAP is also here to assist with concerns about parenting skills and helping your child cope with a specific situation (divorce, death of a family member, bullying, etc.)

Counseling Assistance Program

Alegent + Creighton Health

For further information or an appointment, call the Alegent Creighton Health
Employee Assistance Program at (402) 398-5566 or 1-800-847-4975.